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SPRINGFIELD TIMES

Volume 4, Number 15

Friday, February 24, 2012

16 Pages / 75 Cents

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SPRINGFIELD TIMES

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2012

Councilors get update on downtown design plans

By CRAIG MURPHY
Springfield Times Editor

Plans are in the works to improve downtown Springfield, but help from the city is needed.

Ted Corbin from the Springfield Main Street Design Committee, one of the groups connecting city leaders and downtown revitalization efforts led by NEDCO (Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation), went over various ideas brought up in the past two years during a Springfield City Council work session last week.

"What we need is predictability and opportunity," Corbin said. "We need chances to do things no one else is doing. We also need to know what the landscape of downtown is."

Some of Corbin's suggestions were to encourage city leaders to come up with a program prohibiting the lack of maintenance by businesses, a number of potential projects between \$1,000 and \$4,000 in cost and the idea of hiring a downtown manager.

"That has been done many times in the past, with various levels of success," Corbin said of the last option. "The oppor-

tunity to provide public-private partnership is in a different place than before. We can take past efforts as a guide. There is a lot of interest to gather the energy that has been gathering on many fronts."

Mayor Christine Lundberg recalled past downtown manager positions.

"As a manager, I'm a firm believer you can only be as good as the person that can dedicate time to a project," Lundberg said. "We've had incarnations all over the place. We've had many versions of what downtown should be. I also believe in private-public partnerships."

In other business Feb. 13, councilors heard an update about the Sustainable City Year partnership between Springfield and the University of Oregon. UO students have been working on potential designs for various projects, including the former Waresmart building, new library designs and improved bike paths.

Robert Liberty, executive director of the Sustainable City Initiative, said students and city staff alike have benefitted.

"It's been very rewarding for us," Liberty said. "It's been a wonderful partnership. I'm glad there are still two terms to go."

Chris Jones, SCI program manager, noted city staff presented 14 projects for students to work on.

"There will be more than 400 students participating by the end of the year," Jones said. "There have been hundreds more at the university and the city partners have been represented with strong participation."

Courtney Griesel, management analyst for the city, credited city staff as well as the students who have been spending plenty of time working on projects.

"These are insanely bright students," Griesel said. "We end up getting incredible projects from this."

Councilor Marilee Woodrow pointed to the recent library proposals as one positive example of the work done.

"Seeing the library presentations was fascinating," Woodrow said. "They were in context. They were incorporated with other things that would be available. I was impressed."



Photo by Craig Murphy/Springfield Times
Ted Corbin (left) and Linda Pauly give an update on downtown plans during a Springfield City Council work session Monday, Feb. 13.



Photo by Craig Murphy/Springfield Times
Courtney Griesel (left) from the Springfield City Managers office and Chris Jones (center), program manager of the Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) at the University of Oregon, give an update to Springfield City Councilors during a work session Monday, Feb. 13.